

MOLECULAR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SPECIES OF THE
M. TUBERCULOSIS COMPLEX

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

[0093] Specific genetic deletion are identified in mycobacteria isolates, including variations in the *M. tuberculosis* genome sequence between isolates, and numerous deletion present in BCG as compared to *M. tb*. These deletions are used as markers to distinguish between pathogenic and avirulent strains, and as a marker for particular *M. tb* isolates. Deletions specific to vaccine strains of BCG are useful in determining whether a positive tuberculin skin test is indicative of actual tuberculosis infection. The deleted sequences may be re-introduced into BCG to improve the efficacy of vaccination. Alternatively, the genetic sequence that corresponds to the deletion(s) are deleted from *M. bovis* or *M. tuberculosis* to attenuate the pathogenic bacteria.